VAN DER GRINTEN GALERIE



Elger Esser

Paysages intimes

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We are pleased to present the latest work of Elger Esser in his first solo exhibition at the Van der Grinten Galerie. To assert that Elger Esser is representative of the Düsseldorf School of Photography, the purposeful, conceptual approach of his teachers Bernd and Hilla Becher, may seem surprising given the aching beauty and emotional impact of his images. Though Elger's expression is entirely his own, the influence is apparent in a shared focus: a consistent, committed exploration of the possibilities of the photographic image in a fine arts context. In other words: on a plane that transcends the inconsequential and superficial, with the ambivalent nature of photography as the acknowledged subject and point of departure.

Esser repeatedly turns his artistic and intellectual attention to landscapes (generally featuring bodies of water), locations where the eye cannot cling to borders, making objects and events seem infinite. Viewers are left to draw their own conclusions, which elicits the same subjective response as objective "reality". Although these sites, the places that Esser

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discovers and explores on his many travels, are contemporary locations his work coaxes the timelessness out of them, especially by means of sensitive, subdued coloration and the use of elaborate printing techniques, including some very hands-on historical ones. The Proustian search for time lost is extended to include lost places, a trigger of subconscious remembrance.

In his most recent work, images gathered in Northern France, Elger Esser has printed the photographs on silver-coated copper plates, once a material-of-choice for Baroque painter Adam Elsheimer as it allows for exceedingly thin paint application, letting the luminous ground shimmer through to enrich the effect of the oil paint. Compared to Esser's earlier work the luminosity of the colors here is extreme, and exposed to various lighting scenarios the photographs have a spatial quality and a depth that seems endless.

Esser subverts a fundamental feature of photography: the notion of the precise preservation of a moment in time. His photographs evoke a world where time and place, coordinates of exact documentation, are relative.

Elger Esser was born in 1967 in Stuttgart and grew up in Rome. He studied with Bernd Becher from 1991 to 1997 at the Academy of Fine Arts Düsseldorf.

Works by Elger Esser are represented in the following museum collections, among others: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art New York, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Stiftung Museum Kunstpalast Düsseldorf, Kunsthaus Zürich, Centre Pompidou Paris, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus München, Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, DZ Bank Kunstsammlung Frankfurt am Main.